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THE SOVIET PLOT TO DESTROY MEXICO

For years the Western powers have known that the Soviet embassies within their borders are heavily staffed with KGB officers, members of the Soviet Union's massive intelligence agency. Ostensibly they serve as "diplomats," but quite obviously they are present to gather very special information. Rarely, however, are their more sinister activities exposed in detail and in depth. Here, "The Soviet Plot to Destroy Mexico" opens the locked doors of the Trojan horse which many nations harbor—the Soviet embassy—and reveals the everyday business of KGB ervicey—sabotage, betrayal and violent insurrection.

The Reader's Digest began a survey of subversion in Latin America three years ago. The following story of what happened recently in Mexico is based on this research, and on dozens of interviews with intelligence officers, on captured diaries and confessions, and on conversations with Soviet defectors and KGB officers themselves.

The Russian embassy
in Mexico City

by
JOHN BARRON

THIS PAGE PHOTOGRAPH, OVERLEAF, "MEXICO"
CAUTION AGAINST PHOTO, JULY 21, 1964, PHO
TAKEN ON ALLEY IN MEXICO CITY'S MAIN SQUARE AS PHOTO
SIDE WOULD, PHOTO ABOVE WIDE WOULD

Just before midnight on March 12 this year, five of the most important men in the government of Mexico met at the National Palace. A senior intelligence officer distributed a formal report and a stack of photographs. Silently the officials studied the documents, initially with dismay, then with the anger of men betrayed.

The import of what the Mexican leaders read was staggering. The detailed intelligence summary revealed a KGB plot conceived in Moscow to plunge Mexico into a civil war and destroy its government by armed force. In the words of a Mexican servant of the KGB, it would make of Mexico "another Vietnam."

In an epic counter-intelligence coup, the Mexican security service had uncovered not only the Soviet plan but the identities of the principal KGB officers and Mexican agents involved. Security men had seized caches of arms and explosives, located clandestine training centers and hideouts, and captured guerrilla chieftains. It was a near thing. For the evidence showed that soon the first fires were to be set, the first bombs detonated, the first policeman killed.

"We shall, of course, act—and act

decisively," declared the President of Mexico, Luis Echeverría.

The adviser who had drafted the intelligence report spoke up quickly: "Strike at the embassy, Mr. President. All begins with the embassy. And with Netchiporenko. He is *Número Uno*."

It was true. During the 1960s the KGB had completely taken over the Soviet embassy in Mexico City and developed it into one of the world's great sanctuaries of subversion. And of all the Russians the most skilled and dangerous was Oleg Maksimovich Netchiporenko, justifiably considered by the KGB to be one of its top agents. Slender and darkly handsome, he wore a debonair mustache, and with his wavy black hair and olive complexion looked utterly Latin. Indeed, Mexican authorities suspected that he was either the child of Spanish communists who had fled to Russia after the Spanish Civil War or perhaps the son of a Russian father and a Spanish mother. He kept himself in superb condition by jogging daily and playing tennis the year round. Strangers often guessed him to be ten years younger than his actual age—40. His Spanish was flawless; he spoke the differing idioms of laborers, diplomats and students with equal fluency.

Netchiporenko had trained him-

"ACT," BY JOHN BARRON, WILL BE PUBLISHED IN 1972

8. April
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self to adapt, chameleon-like, to disparate environments. He could and sometimes did don the clothes of a *campesino*, go out into the countryside and win automatic acceptance as a farmer or laborer. Similarly, at the universities, where he spent many of his working hours, students thought of him as one of them. With the same ease, he could affect the manners of a bright young Mexican business or professional man. Indeed, he once assumed just such a pose and strode into the U. S. embassy. For more than an hour he wandered about, gleaning what information he could, until a security officer recognized him as a KGB agent.

Netchiporenko simply was the best KGB field operative in Latin America. He knew it; so did everybody else in the embassy. Few KGB officers, though, felt comfortable around him. He disdained intellectual inferiors and scarcely condescended to speak to the Russians he considered stupid or unimportant. Sometimes he insulted colleagues by ignoring a dull comment and walking away without a word. But the primary reason no one relaxed around Netchiporenko was that he also was the SK officer—the officer charged with preserving the security of the *Sovyet'skaya Kolonia* or Soviet colony in Mexico.

As such, he constantly scrutinized everyone for the least portent of disaffection or psychological breakdown. KGB officers, conditioned from their earliest training to watch



Oleg Maksimovich Netchiporenko
and his wife, Lydia

each other, realized that in his eyes deviation from prescribed behavior had to be cause for official suspicion. So they feared Netchiporenko, and he had almost no real friends. He was not the kind who needed them.

The Dungeon

NETCHIPORENKO had arrived in Mexico City with his wife and two small children in 1961. Although he had been thoroughly briefed in Mos-

cow, the life and routine of the embassy still demanded some unexpected adjustments. The embassy itself surprised and amused him. Everything about it reeked of conspiracy.

A somber gray Victorian villa with ornate cupolas and shuttered windows, it stood partially hidden behind trees at Calzada de Tacubaya 204. A tall iron fence encircled the grounds, which armed sentries patrolled. At night, an armed guard paced the roof. A concealed camera photographed everyone admitted through the gate. At embassy receptions, guards ensured that no guests ventured beyond the reception rooms on the first floor. Foreigners never were allowed in the small, sterile offices and apartments on the second floor.

But the most inaccessible area of the embassy was a large section of the third floor known among KGB officers as the "dungeon." This was the *Referentura*, the heart and brain of any Soviet embassy. Here all operations of the KGB were planned and administered. Here the secrets of Soviet subversion in the Western Hemisphere were stored.

Testimony of Russians who have fled from Soviet embassies in various countries indicates that *Referenturas* the world over are much the same. They normally are divided into soundproofed rooms designed for conferences, study and the drafting of messages. The most restricted area houses the files as well as cipher and radio equipment for communications with Moscow. No

documents may ever be removed from a *Referentura*; no briefcases, cameras or recording equipment ever brought in. A *Referentura* staff includes a chief, his deputy and cipher personnel who live under virtual house arrest. Rarely does the KGB permit them to leave the embassy grounds, and then only in a group accompanied by armed security personnel.

To enter the *Referentura* in Mexico City, an officer walked down a narrow corridor and pressed a buzzer which opened the door of an antechamber and alerted the watch to his approach. At the end of the chamber was a steel door with a peephole through which he was inspected.

All outside windows of the *Referentura* had been sealed with cement to block long-range electronic or photographic surveillance. KGB officers complained that, with sunlight and fresh air thus shut out, the atmosphere inside was perpetually dark, dank and musty. They grumbled also because, as a result of this dungeon-like atmosphere, smoking was forbidden.

The *Referentura* never closed. And, during the ensuing years, Netchiporenko was to come to it at any hour of the day or night. It was the one place in Mexico where he could feel completely secure and speak of his work freely.

In Moscow, the KGB had advised Netchiporenko that his wife would be expected to "help out" at the embassy. He did not understand that

this meant a full-time job. Because the KGB refused to permit employment of a single Mexican, most Russian wives had to labor as secretaries, file clerks, telephone operators, typists or petty administrators.

When a reception was held at the embassy, a list of duties for the wives was posted. Some were to attend as guests, some as maids, and others as kitchen helpers. Netchiporenko had to inform his wife that at her first party in Mexico she would be a maid. After the guests left, he and all the other Russian men waited while their wives did the dishes.

However, Netchiporenko soon accepted, as necessary to security, the rules that bound all Russians in Mexico City. He perceived that the embassy, regarded by the KGB as one of its four or five most important installations outside the Soviet Union, offered boundless professional opportunities. Energetically, he set out to make the most of them.

Web of Subversion

NETCHIPORENKO's work began in the *Referentura* with briefings about some of the KGB operations against Mexico. They revealed that the Russians were less interested in collecting intelligence about the country than in developing agents who could influence Mexican policies and create disorder.

The Russians had almost succeeded in 1959 in bringing significant segments of the Mexican economy to a standstill. That year, the KGB bribed labor leader Demetrio Vallejo

to paralyze the national railway system with wildcat strikes. Caught consorting with KGB officers Nikolai Remisov and Nikolai Aksenov, Vallejo admitted taking a million pesos (\$80,000) from them to organize the strikes.

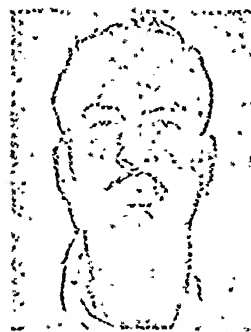
Netchiporenko saw that now the KGB was attempting to plant female agents in key secretarial positions within the most important government ministries. It also was seeking to position in the Foreign Ministry an agent who could affect assignments of Mexican diplomats throughout the world. In an even more sinister operation, the KGB was trying to establish its own private detective force, composed of a corrupt ex-police official and cashiered cops. Through them it planned to gather data for blackmailing Mexicans, to harass anti-Castro Cuban exiles and to execute "wet affairs."

Netchiporenko was to be involved in all these operations. But his primary assignment was to infiltrate the universities and recruit students for future subversion. Prospects usually were spotted through the Communist Party or the Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange. The latter was directed by the Soviet cultural attaché, a KGB officer; it was financed by the KGB; and its daily affairs were administered by Mexican communists handpicked by the KGB. Openly, the Institute disseminated Soviet propaganda and sponsored meetings of communist

*The KGB term for operations requiring the spilling of blood.

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sympathizers. Covertly, it served other functions. With offices strategically located throughout the country, it offered KGB officers a ready excuse to travel to any section of Mexico. Youths attracted by its films, book shows and free Russian lessons unknowingly were evaluated by the KGB. Those who appeared particularly promising were approached and offered scholarships to Patrice Lumumba Friendship University in



Fabricio Gómez Souza

Moscow, where the KGB could develop their subversive potential.

A Man for the KGB

HEARING about the scholarships, an embittered Mexican named Fabricio Gómez Souza addressed an inquiry to the Soviet embassy. Invited to the Institute's office in Mexico City for an interview, he arrived on a summer afternoon in 1963 and was courteously greeted in Spanish by Netchiporenko.

"There is nothing I care to say to you," Gómez announced. "I came to see the Russians." Netchiporenko coolly surveyed the Mexican, spoke

a few sentences in Russian, then said in Spanish, "I am Russian. Now please sit down and let me see if I can help you."

Gómez was a squat, muscular 31-year-old schoolteacher with black eyes and a scowling, swarthy face. Since finishing college ten years before, he had taught school in the small town of Nanchital. Long interested in communism, he had read extensively about Marxist and other revolutionary theory. Early in 1963 he married. While still honeymooning, his bride fell ill and died of an ailment that doctors could not diagnose. In his grief and rage, Gómez blamed Mexico, its culture and institutions for failing to provide the kind of medical care that might have saved her life. Now he believed that Mexican society must be destroyed so that it might be rebuilt, and he had concluded that the most practical way to destroy it was to work with the Russians.

As the two men talked late into the evening, Netchiporenko knew that here was a man for the KGB. Gómez was no posturing student caught up in a fad. Rather, he emerged in Netchiporenko's judgment as a tough, realistic convert who could be trained to endure, obey and do whatever was necessary for the KGB.

So strong was Netchiporenko's recommendation that the KGB acted swiftly to spirit Gómez out of the country. KGB processing for Patrice Lumumba ordinarily required months. But within three

B. Approx
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weeks Netchiporenko handed Gómez cash and tickets for a flight to Moscow. From the moment he landed the KGB treated him as a very special student. Indeed, he was. For Fabricio Gómez Souza was destined to lead the guerrilla force that the Soviet Union years later was to unleash upon Mexico.

The Prime Target

DURING the next two years, Netchiporenko sent at least a dozen others off to Moscow and at the same time recruited agents for the KGB directly from Mexican universities. Yet KGB headquarters kept demanding more. From his own briefings in Moscow, Netchiporenko could appreciate why.

The pressure reflected KGB judgment that Mexico was the most important target in Latin America, not only because of its proximity to the United States but because of the great potential of its abundant natural resources and sublime climate. A succession of national administrations had been making dramatic social and economic progress. Allocating more money to education than to any other purpose, the government reduced adult illiteracy from 63 percent in 1940 to 17 percent in 1970. Between 1960 and 1970, annual per-capita income increased from \$330 to \$660.

Poverty, exacerbated by rapid population growth, endured. But the average Mexican, who enjoyed incomparably more freedom than a

Soviet citizen, could see proof of continuing betterment, and thereby derive hope for the future. Thus, if Soviet subversion was to succeed in Mexico, this government had to be undermined.

Accordingly, in the mid-1960s, the KGB slipped more and more officers into Mexico City in the guise of diplomats. In the fall of 1966, it assigned one of its best staff specialists in Latin American affairs as *Resident*, the KGB boss of the embassy.* He was Boris Pavlovich Kolomiakov, an officer who, like Netchiporenko, had never suffered serious failure. **B. Approx 1925**

At 47, Kolomiakov was balding but trim and vigorous. Comfortable with authority and responsibility, he was proud of his assignment and of his reputation. The first to arrive at the embassy, the last to leave, he worked and studied constantly. He daily read as many as 20 Mexican, U.S. and Canadian newspapers. No matter what the pressures of work, he daily reserved at least half an hour for improvement of his English. His wife privately complained to others that he spent too much of their money on books and periodicals.

In purely personal matters, Kolomiakov was kind. An inflexible caste system prevailed throughout the Soviet colony, rank being the

*In most Russian embassies, the ultimate authority in all important matters is the senior KGB officer, or *Resident*. Unless the Soviet ambassador is a representative of the Central Committee, he is merely a ceremonial figurehead and administrator.

Mexico
Russia

sole determinant of perquisites and social standing. The few non-intelligence personnel were the outcasts, openly referred to as "lesser mortals." Kolomiakov flouted these distinctions. An illness in any Soviet family brought from him a visit, flowers and assurances of all help needed. He could be a compassionate counselor when marital difficulties arose.

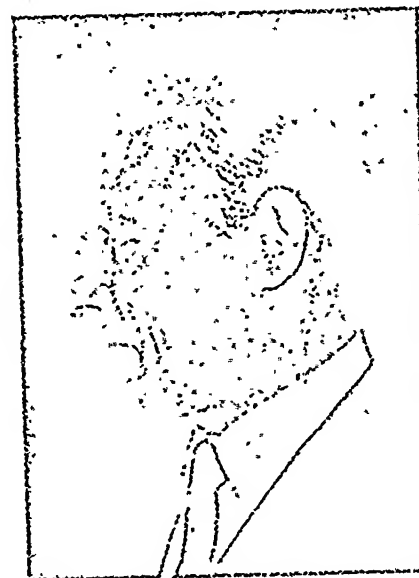
If Kolomiakov was kind to his subordinates personally, he was mercilessly demanding of them professionally. He required that all match his own energy and insisted upon measurable "production," which he could chart and report to Moscow. Laxity or errors evoked from him withering reprimands that could turn even veteran KGB officers pale. Once he summoned a highly regarded subordinate and upbraided him for nearly an hour. When the officer emerged from his office, a secretary saw him weeping. Three days later, he abruptly departed for the Soviet Union. His banishment was never explained officially; the rumor that swept through the embassy was simply: "He failed."

Near Disaster

By 1968, the number of Russians over whom Kolomiakov presided at the embassy had grown to a preposterous 57, all but eight of whom were professional intelligence officers. The Soviet embassy staff was more than three times as large as those of the embassies of Great Britain, West Germany, France or

Japan. While these nations had extensive trade and other ties with Mexico requiring diplomatic representation, the Soviet Union had virtually none.

Among Mexico's world trading partners, Russia in 1968 ranked almost last. That year, it purchased



Boris Pavlovich Kolomiakov

only \$368 worth of Mexican goods. There were only 216 legal travelers between the two countries. Few Soviet ships called at Mexican ports. Cultural relations between the two nations were virtually nonexistent, and Mexico found that it needed only five diplomats in Moscow.

Indeed, the Russians barely bothered to pretend that they were engaged in diplomacy. Weeks often passed without any Soviet "diplo-

mat" making an official visit to a Mexican government office. The Russians opened their consular and cultural offices only four hours a week. Thus, armored with the protection of diplomatic status, they were almost entirely free to ply their true trade of subversion.

More than half the KGB personnel were engaged primarily in operations against the United States, but an apparatus of more than 20 men, led by Netchiporenko, was working exclusively against Mexico. And by 1968 they had developed in the universities a corps of agents who gave the KGB a new capability for violence. As the 1968 Olympic Games approached, the KGB perceived a way to use these youthful agents with devastating effect.

The trouble began with a commonplace incident on July 23, when dozens of students from two preparatory schools got into a brawl. Police intervened to break it up, and in so doing bloodied some heads. On July 26, the Young Communist Party staged a long-planned rally to celebrate the Cuban revolution and attempted to march on the National Palace. When the police moved to halt them, the communists attacked with clubs and rocks, and another brawl ensued.

Demonstrations called to protest "police brutality" culminated in destructive rioting the next three nights as mobs shattered windows, set buses afire and hurled Molotov cocktails in downtown Mexico City. A quickly formed National Strike

Council appealed to all Mexican students to boycott classes. Students seized the National University and the Polytechnic Institute, whose combined enrollment exceeded 120,000. In August, these schools became sanctuaries from which a band of zealots sallied forth to demonstrate and riot. As the violence intensified, foreign journalists speculated that the Olympics might have to be canceled.

After the initial outbreaks in July, only a minute fraction of the thousands of rioters were communists; fewer still had ever heard of KGB. Usually, however, the actual violence was initiated by so-called *Brigadas de Choque*, or shock brigades. These were disciplined groups of 15 to 30 men, often including paid thugs. Many were organized, financed and led by members of the Young Communist Party or youths directed by the KGB through the Institute for Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange. Communists constituted only a small minority on the 200-member National Strike Council. Yet eight of the most vigorous, effective and intransigent leaders in the disturbances were agents of the KGB--four of them recruited by Netchiporenko.

During the turmoil, the KGB maintained contact with its young agents through the Communist Party. Moreover, the second week in September, KGB agent Boris ~~Voskoboimikov~~, who masqueraded as Soviet cultural attaché, rendezvoused with students outside Popu-

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Preparatory School No. 1. And KGB officer Valentín Lezínov, the same week, met two separate groups of students near a downtown theater.

As the disturbances continued, the army, on September 18, took over the National University, across the street from the Olympic Stadium.

The next week, Mexico suffered its worst violence since the revolutionary battles of the 1920s. Students and adult anarchists managed to acquire large quantities of arms, and fierce gunfights broke out nightly between them and troops. Around schools, students battled police with pistols, knives, clubs and gasoline bombs. Intensifying violence gravely threatened the Olympic Games, scheduled to begin October 12.

Disaster appeared imminent when the government learned that riot leaders were secretly planning a climactic assault on the Polytechnic Institute, now occupied by the army. Their purpose was to create casualties and chaos that would doom the Olympics once and for all. Preparing for the attack, they stored, in apartments of the sprawling Tlatelolco housing project, explosives and hundreds of weapons, including .22-caliber machine guns and high-powered rifles with telescopic sights.

The afternoon of October 2, some 6000 youths gathered for a rally in the Plaza of Three Cultures, adjacent to the apartment project. The government authorized a rally, but stationed troops in the vicinity to prevent any march. The gathering was peaceful enough until the eighth

speaker took the podium. He was Socrates Amado Campos Lemus, a radical fugitive whom authorities had hunted for weeks. As plainclothesmen moved to arrest him, an army helicopter dropped a flare, signaling the troops to advance into the plaza.

Using a bullhorn, General José Hernández Toledo declared the rally over, and urged the students to disband. Suddenly, volleys of sniper fire rang out from apartment balconies, and Hernández was felled by three bullets, two in the back, one in the leg.

A terrible battle lasted about ten minutes, with troops shooting up into the balconies at the snipers and the revolutionaries spraying bullets down into the plaza. Twenty-six civilians and two soldiers, almost all in the plaza, died. But as some 80 hard-core members of the National Strike Council attempted to flee through the rear of the project, police captured them. Without their leadership, the uprising ended, and the Olympics proceeded.

The KGB had come close, but had failed. So, a new onslaught was planned, to be led by Fabricio Gómez Souza, whose potential Netchiporenko had so quickly perceived five years before. Now the KGB turned to him and Patrice Lumumba Friendship University.

"Helpful" North Koreans

Nikita S. Khrushchev had announced in 1960 that Patrice Lu-

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Lumumba University was being established to train "intelligentsia cadres" for the nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America. However, within the Soviet Union, Russian authorities have stated the university's mission more plainly: "To educate students from underdeveloped countries so they can return to their homelands to become the nucleus for pro-Soviet activities."

The First Vice Rector of Patrice Lumumba was Pavel Erzin, a major general of the KGB. Other KGB officers and agents serve on the faculty, which must obey the dictates of the KGB. Students are selected primarily on the basis of their potential usefulness to the KGB. (If the Russians really want to educate a foreigner to work, for instance, on a Russian foreign-aid project back home, the student does not attend Patrice Lumumba; he goes to a first-rate Soviet university or technical school.)

Upon arrival at Patrice Lumumba in the autumn of 1963, Gómez joined some 30 other Mexicans who also had come to Moscow without the knowledge of their government. After studying Russian for a year, he was put into a special class of students who had demonstrated the greatest revolutionary zeal. Even in this elite, he distinguished himself during the next four years of indoctrination by his cold fanaticism and obedience to the Russians. In October 1968, when the KGB gave Gómez his initial assignment, it probably had as much confidence in

him as it ever places in a foreigner.

He began the assignment as leading actor in an elaborate fiction staged by the KGB. One morning, Mexican students in Moscow were called together, ostensibly to hear a fresh report about the recent violence in their country. An unfamiliar Russian, who purportedly had talked with travelers just back from Mexico City, appeared before them. He gravely stated that the Mexican army had killed hundreds of students, arrested thousands more, and was now hunting down all remaining "progressives" in a murderous purge of the universities. "They are slaughtering students in the streets as if they were insects," he concluded. "And today there is no Pancho Villa, no Emiliano Zapata to defend them."

Gómez stood up, as if rising spontaneously to the challenge. "I request permission of the university to conduct a meeting of all Mexicans," he said formally. "I mean no disrespect, but we would prefer that no one else be present. We Mexicans must redeem our own honor."

Passionately, Gómez harangued his fellow countrymen on the necessity of avenging the dead students and sweeping Mexico with Marxist revolution. "I say it is time to stop musing about theory," he cried. "It is time to act. All of us must prepare ourselves as guerrilla warriors."

That evening, Gómez invited to his dormitory ten or so selected Mexicans, including two entrusted with supporting roles in the KGB

plot. Inspired by more oratory, bravado and vodka, the group proclaimed the birth of the *Movimiento de Acción Revolucionaria* (MAR). At the suggestion of Gómez, the students also agreed to solicit guerrilla training from Cuba and North Vietnam.

With addresses supplied by an obliging Russian "professor," the Mexicans first visited the Cuban embassy in Moscow. Two Cubans received them hospitably, offering coffee and cigars while listening attentively to their proposals. "We of course are sympathetic to your objectives," said one Cuban. "However, our diplomatic relations with Mexico form an extremely valuable channel into the non-socialist camp. At this time it would not be in the greater interests of revolution for us to provoke a break in relations."

The North Vietnamese were more brusque. "We are already fighting a guerrilla war," said a wizened, bespectacled functionary. "Our lives are at stake, and we have absolutely no resources to spare."

Back at the university, Gómez dutifully affected dejection as he recounted the Mexicans' experiences to the Russian "professor." "An idea occurs to me," remarked the Russian. "Have you thought of the North Koreans? Perhaps they would be helpful."

At the North Korean embassy, Gómez spoke the same preliminary lines that the KGB had cued him to use at the other embassies. The North Koreans dispensed with pre-

tenses. "Yes, yes, we have agreed; it is arranged," an officer said to Gómez. "Are you the one appointed to fly to Pyongyang?"

The KGB had dictated, directed and managed each act of this scenario, beginning with the "report" to assembled Mexican students and ending with the visit to the North Korean embassy—all in order to conceal its sponsorship of the guerrillas. It sought to create the illusion that Mexican students had spontaneously decided to form a guerrilla force, and on their own initiative had found a patron in North Korea, which had no diplomatic ties with Mexico. This is what most Mexicans subsequently drawn into the movement would be led to believe. Through this deception the Russians expected to escape retaliation and avoid the loss of their vital embassy in Mexico.

The Clown

EARLY in November, Gómez flew via Aeroflot to the North Korean capital of Pyongyang, where he conferred with intelligence and military officers. Again the Koreans were well prepared. They advised Gómez that no more than 50 dedicated revolutionaries were required. Each would be developed into a leader and teacher of future recruits. Once the force of 50 was deployed, it would multiply like a cancer through the cities and mountainous countryside of Mexico. To permit time for careful selection of trainees and to avoid attracting attention, the

Koreans recommended that the 50 Mexicans be brought to Pyongyang in three successive contingents.

Back in Moscow, Gómez picked up \$25,000 from the North Korean embassy and divided it among four other students chosen by the KGB to return with him to Mexico as recruiters. Traveling singly by separate routes, they landed in Mexico City in late December 1968 and early January 1969.

At the same time, the Russians dispatched to Mexico City a senior KGB officer who, in the temporary absence of the ambassador, became chargé d'affaires. He was Dimitri Alekseyevich Diakonov, whom the other Russians promptly dubbed "The Clown." In private, they

laughed at his appearance and manners. His pate was totally bald except for growths of hair protruding angularly from either side of his head. If he let the hair grow, he looked as if he had horns; if he cut it, he looked as if he had been scalped. His hair, combined with huge, sunken eyes and a guttural voice, made him seem like a caricature of a bomb-throwing Bolshevik of the early 1900s. Attempting to make a speech, he was virtually powerless to control his hands. He alternately stuck his thumbs in his pockets and leaned backward, or clutched his hands behind his back and leaned forward. In either posture, he created the impression of a man about to topple.

Moreover, Diakonov was a stern puritan appalled by the adultery and lewd references to sex commonplace in the cloistered Soviet colony. At a weekly Communist Party meeting, he stood up to call for reform. "I am shocked," he began, "to hear within an embassy of the Soviet Union dirty talk about sex. Such talk is contrary to communist morality. Yet it is heard all the time, even, I am ashamed to say, among the female comrades. . . ." Waves of giggles from the women interrupted, embarrassed and mystified Diakonov.

All the women knew that the worst offender against his concept of communist morality was Lydia Netchiporenko, Oleg's wife. When Netchiporenko had first met her,

Lydia was a 19-year-old salesclerk with a lithe figure and the face of a madonna. Her physical appeal initially obscured in his eyes her lack of education and her coarseness. While KGB training and travel transformed him into a sophisticated, cosmopolitan man, Lydia utterly failed to grow intellectually, and deteriorated physically into dumpiness. Her scatological jokes, which once had seemed amusingly risqué to Netchiporenko, now shamed him. After a couple of drinks at parties, she would make vulgar advances to other KGB officers, who dared not offend either her or her husband.

Lydia cunningly used her husband's power, appointing herself watchdog over the Russian wives.

Their private lives became her official domain. She pried incessantly, and maliciously tried to set woman against woman by asking questions of one that might incriminate or debase another. She delighted in degrading a woman by making false accusations, then forcing her to disprove them. Netchiporenko came to loathe her, and so did everybody else.

Ignorant of this background, Diakonov stumbled on with his speech: "I want you to know something else. I am shocked by the statements some of you make about the Mexicans. They are naïve and can be manipulated, but it must not be said that they are dirty, that they are lazy, that they have no culture...."

Giggles and smirks again greeted Diakonov, for again Lydia was the prime culprit. Then, suddenly, the laughter stopped as if turned off by a switch. Kolomiakov was on his feet and clearly enraged. "Why do you insult Comrade Diakonov?" he shouted. "He is absolutely correct. Comrade Diakonov speaks for the party. He also speaks for the organs of state security. Do you understand?" Everybody understood.

However foolish Diakonov may have appeared to the Russian women, he was not the clown they thought him. In the back alleys of the world, he had proven himself the equal of the most violent men. The government of Argentina threw him out of Buenos Aires in 1959 after he created chaos by instigating labor riots. In 1963, he turned up in Brazil as a member of a Soviet

"Peace Prize Commission." His labors there culminated in a rebellion by noncommissioned officers of the Brazilian army, and he was kicked out of the country. A specialist in strikes, riots and violence, Diakonov was admirably equipped to deal with guerrillas. And that was his mission in Mexico.

The Road to Pyongyang

THROUGH Diakonov, the KGB was kept informed of the recruiting progress being made by Gómez and his Mexican subordinates. Kolomiakov in turn suggested prospective recruits spotted by the KGB apparatus in Mexico.

One name that had long been in the *Referentura* file of prospects was that of Angel Bravo Cisneros, a mustachioed student radical who looked a little like a pudgy Adolf Hitler. On a cool evening in April 1969, Gómez traveled to the old and lovely colonial city of Morelia to seek him out. At a café frequented by students near the University of Michoacán, the two talked fervently for an hour or so about Vietnam, Cuba and revolution in general.

Bravo seldom used one word when he could find three. His conversation was larded with revolutionary slogans and hoary Marxist clichés, which he declaimed as if he had originated them. Unable to achieve distinction in scholarship, he had turned to anarchy. In this, he had attained some success, joining a variety of extremist groups and

helping foment a series of student riots.

"You have demonstrated energy," Gómez said, "but that is no substitute for knowledge and skill. We must leave the country and be trained by experts."

"Such training would be an honor of which I would always strive to be worthy," Bravo responded.

"Good," Gómez replied. "I want you to establish residence in Mexico City. In the months ahead, I will send to you comrades who are to undergo training. You will serve as liaison between them and me, and also ensure that they obtain all necessary travel documents. At the proper time, you will lead them on the journey out of the country."

"Perhaps you have observed that I am possessed of great intellectual curiosity," Bravo said grandly. "I would be pleased to know the land to which I will journey."

Gómez glowered at him. "You are to take orders, not ask questions. I will tell you only this: our duty is to make of Mexico another Vietnam."

Through the summer, a succession of youths in their early 20s checked in with Bravo in Mexico City. Fourteen men and two women were gathered in the city when Gómez visited Bravo in mid-August. "Your journey is about to begin," said Gómez, unwrapping a package containing nearly \$9000.

"Divide the comrades into groups of two or three and give each person \$500. Instruct each group to make its own arrangements to fly to Paris.

But make certain that each group leaves on a different day and uses a different airline. Tell everyone to assemble at 10 a.m. on September 7 at the Eiffel Tower."

"Are we to be trained in France?" Bravo asked with excitement.

"Pay attention," Gómez ordered. "You are to tell the comrades no more than I have told you. However, after you gather in Paris, you are to guide them to West Berlin, where



you will stay at the Hotel Colombia. Each day you must cross into East Berlin and, beginning at 1 p.m., stand on the corner by the Restaurant Moscow. Sooner or later you will see a man you know. From him you will receive further orders."

All 17 Mexicans appeared as planned at the Eiffel Tower on September 7. Though some grumbled about being kept in ignorance of their ultimate destination, they willingly flew on to Berlin. After failing on three successive days to meet anyone he recognized in East Berlin, Bravo began to worry. The future guerrillas didn't have enough mon-

cy left to pay their hotel bills, and soon there would be none for meals. On the fourth day, however, as Bravo stood by the Restaurant Moscow, he felt a tap on his shoulder, and there was Gómez:

After listening to Bravo's account of the trip and the group's financial plight, Gómez said, "I will see what can be done. Walk around for a while, and meet me here in a couple of hours."

Gómez returned in mid-afternoon with about \$1000. "Tomorrow bring me passport photographs of each of the comrades, including yourself," he instructed. "We should be able to depart in three or four days. Until then, you and I will meet here daily." On their seventh day in Germany, Gómez told Bravo: "We go tomorrow. Bring everyone to the main railway station of East Berlin at noon."

In the dark, cavernous old railroad terminal, four somber North Koreans awaited the Mexicans. They handed each a Korean passport bearing his photograph and a Korean name. In return, they required each to surrender his Mexican passport and all other papers reflecting his true identity. At 5 p.m., Gómez led the Mexicans aboard the night train to Moscow. Only after it started to move did he reveal that their final destination was Pyongyang.

To the customs and immigration officials who boarded the train at the Polish and Soviet borders, it was obvious that the Mexicans were not the Koreans their passports repre-

sented them to be. When a Soviet inspector approached, the youngest of the future guerrillas, Felipe Penaloza, nervously pulled from his pocket both his Korean passport and his Mexican draft card, which he had neglected to give to the Koreans in Berlin. "Nyet, nyet!" exclaimed the Russian, grabbing the Mexican document. But, seeing the boy's terror, the inspector smiled, patted his shoulder and walked away with the draft card. The KGB had prepared the way thoroughly.

More North Koreans greeted the Mexicans in Moscow and drove them in embassy cars to a hotel where they were confined for five days pending the flight to Pyongyang. The KGB had, of course, supervised all travel arrangements. But the trip was so contrived by them that at no time in Moscow or during the entire passage across the Soviet Union did any Mexican except Gómez converse with a Russian. To all but Gómez, it seemed that the Koreans were in charge.

"Some Comrades Will Die"

WHATEVER the Mexicans may have expected in North Korea, doubtless none anticipated the grueling regimen that awaited them. The guerrilla training camp, set in a valley between two mountain ranges some 35 miles northwest of the capital, was bleak and forbidding. It consisted of wooden barracks, a mess hall, frame buildings housing classrooms and administrative offices, and ranges for practice in small

North Korea
Russia
France
Mexico
East Germany
West Germany

arms, demolition and hand-to-hand combat. The training day, beginning with a solid hour of exercise, lasted from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. The trainees were told that they must henceforth forsake both sex and alcohol. Both were labeled useless and disruptive distractions from fighting. Except for an occasional visit to a circus or outing in the countryside, no recreation was provided. There were excursions to factories and villages—but only to teach the Mexicans how to destroy them.

They received zealous instruction in all the tools of terror. These included arson, explosives, karate, assassination, extortion, ambush, disguises, clandestine travel, recruitment, communications and weaponry. In learning about weapons, the students practiced almost exclusively with American-made equipment. A humorless little Korean known as Comrade Lee explained why.

"In the initial phase of guerrilla warfare, you must make the enemy supply you with arms and money he began. "To obtain guns, kill policemen and soldiers who have them. To obtain money, rob banks and stores. While sustaining you these assassinations and expropriations contribute to the terrorization of the enemy. For a time they also mislead him into thinking 'is confronted merely by common criminals."

"The Mexican army and police buy mostly American arms. These are what you will be using, at least in the first years."

The most realistic and brutal of the training exercises pitted the young guerrillas against regular elements of the North Korean army. The Mexicans were required to infiltrate military bases, sabotage guarded vehicles, set ambushes, fight the soldiers with their bare hands and flee pursuing patrols. The women trainees received no special consideration, except that in the field their packs were not as heavy as the men's. Fatigue, injury or illness excused no one from the nightly seminars at which the day's lessons were rigorously reviewed.

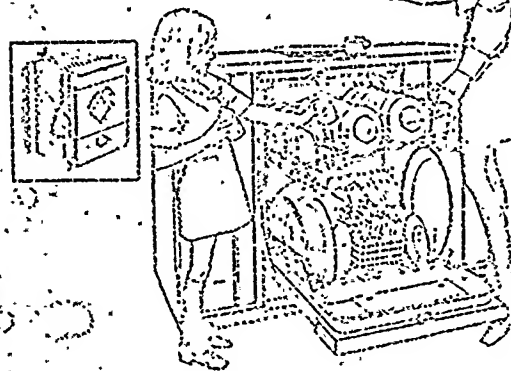
In its harshness, the training had a purpose beyond making the Mexicans physically strong and technically proficient. The communists

strove to develop each one into a disciplined fanatic, consumed by the objective of destroying the Mexican government. A senior instructor called Comrade Sung repeatedly stressed the concept of selflessness and sacrifice.

"Some comrades will die lonely deaths of wounds which cannot be attended," he warned. "Some will be imprisoned with no hope of liberation until victory. Many of you will have to discharge your revolutionary duties in the night, then work all day at ordinary jobs in which you have no interest. No matter what the hour, when the order comes to move, to bomb, to kill, you must obey instantly."

As in Moscow, Gómez was a prize

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pupil. But he did not really need all the tactical training. His was a higher mission of organization, planning and leadership. So, after less than three months, Gómez slipped out of the North Korean camp. Picking up \$10,000 in Moscow, he flew in early January 1970 to Berlin, then on to Mexico. There he began assembling the final contingent of would-be guerrillas.

Locked in the *Referentura*, reading the reports that charted the progress of Gómez and the *Movimiento de Acción Revolucionaria*, Netchiporenko could be proud of himself. Gómez had justified every expectation, and thereby had enhanced Netchiporenko's already glittering reputation at the KGB center in Moscow. Then the unexpected suddenly clouded Netchiporenko's prospects.

How Much Did She Know?

ON THE morning of February 7, 1970, Kolomiakov received a telephone call from the Soviet commercial office located in a small villa adjacent to the embassy. "Raya has vanished," an attaché said.

Immediately Kolomiakov summoned Netchiporenko to the *Referentura* and informed him that Raya Kiselnikova had apparently fled. To Netchiporenko, the news had special and terrible meaning.

The widow of a Soviet physicist who had died of radiation, Raya was 30, blond, blue-eyed, pretty and sensuous. Officially she was a secretary in the commercial section of the

embassy; actually she was much more. As a student of literature, she had personally known many Russian intellectuals. Later, study in East Berlin, with opportunities to sneak into West Berlin, had given her furtive, delicious tastes of Western life. Ever since, she had continued intellectually to quest, explore and educate herself. Russian men were almost compulsively attracted to her, not only because of her seductive appearance but because she could talk to them about the world as few of their wives could. Moreover, she had about her a girlish openness that tempted men to trust and confide.

Even KGB officers felt at ease with Raya. They sometimes commanded her presence in the evening, ostensibly as a cover for some secret assignment. Usually this was merely a pretext to enjoy her company. But on occasion she did serve as a genuine decoy and thereby witnessed clandestine meetings between the KGB and its Mexican agents. A few officers flaunted their secret exploits in an attempt to impress her with their importance. Even Kolomiakov, who harbored no amorous designs on Raya, liked and relied upon her.

But the man who most trusted and confided in her was Netchiporenko himself. She was all he yearned for in a wife, all that Lydia was not. If he had one genuine friend in Mexico, it was Raya. Now he had to ask himself tormenting questions: Exactly what had he told



Raya Kiselnikova, at a press conference in Mexico City

her in the many unguarded moments they had shared? How much did she know? Many another KGB officer had to search his memory with the same questions.

As SK officer responsible for recovering any defector, Netchiporenko immediately organized a hunt for Raya. All other business of the KGB halted while every available Russian joined the search. The corrupt ex-police official who commanded a squad of cashiered cops for the KGB was summoned. The KGB did not have to tell him what to do if his detectives found Raya.

He knew that he was to retrieve or kill.

All efforts were in vain. On February 10, the Mexican government announced that Raya Kiselnikova had requested and received political asylum. The Soviet embassy demanded an interview with her, and Kolomiakov sent Netchiporenko. He was magnificent in his tender appeals. Never referring to communism or the Soviet state, he spoke of her love of Russian culture and their bond with each other. Constantly he stressed, as the KGB always does in such a situation, that if she returned now, she would be guilty of no more than a foolish peccadillo which would be promptly and permanently forgiven.

But having tasted the gaiety, liberty and promise of Mexican life, Raya had come to look upon the Russian embassy as an Orwellian ant heap. And ultimately she saw it, permeated as it was by pettiness, mistrust, fear, regimentation and conspiracy, as a microcosm of Soviet society. She began to cry. "Oleg, I am sorry, I am sorry," she said. "You must know I can never go back."

As Mexican security officers stepped forward to end the interview, Netchiporenko kissed her and left, also in tears.

KGB interrogations of embassy personnel permitted no illusions about the value of the intelligence Raya might disclose to the Mexican government. She knew that Netchiporenko had recruited some of the

RAPPROX 1942
EAST GERMANY
WEST GERMANY
RUSSIA

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students who emerged as prominent leaders in the 1968 riots. She personally had accompanied Valentin Loginov to his clandestine meeting with students at the height of the riots. She had heard KGB officers brag about bribing certain magazine and newspaper editors to publish pro-Soviet stories. She could recite in clear, meaningful detail what went on inside the embassy.

But one question concerned Kolomiakov and Netchiporenko more than any other: Could Raya conceivably know anything about Gómez and the guerrillas? Strenuous reconstructions of associations, conversations and all data to which Raya might have had access yielded no evidence that she did. Neither could clandestine KGB sources discover any indication that the Mexican government had become aware of the incipient guerrilla movement. Thus, the KGB elected to let the operation continue. As the months passed without disaster, it seemed that Raya's defection would be nothing more than a minor blemish on Netchiporenko's brilliant record.

"Comrades, We Are Ready"

The guerrilla training in North Korea for the final 23 recruits and the 17 members of the second contingent ended in August 1970. They split into three groups for the journey home via Moscow. By late September, all were back, mentally and physically ready for their secret labors.

The morning after the last group

landed in Mexico City, Gómez convened his chief deputies, including Bravo, in an apartment at Calle Medellín 27. "Our immediate objective is to increase our numbers as rapidly as possible without making any sacrifice in quality of personnel," he announced. "Once our numbers are sufficient, we will divide into an urban guerrilla force and a rural guerrilla force. Comrades, we are ready to begin."

The *Movimiento de Acción Revolucionaria* progressed with astonishing swiftness. In less than two months it doubled in size by adding some 50 recruits spotted and screened by the first ten guerrillas who had returned from North Korea in 1969. Clandestine schools were established in Zamora, San Miguel de Allende, Querétaro, Puebla, Chapala and Mexico City. A special school for the training of future instructors was founded in Salamanca. Apartments or houses where guerrillas could hide and mount operations were acquired in Mexico City, Acapulco and Jalapa.

Some of the guerrillas took jobs, both to earn money for the movement and to cloak themselves in an aura of respectability. One of the most ruthless, Alejandro López Murillo, opened a beauty salon in Mexico City. The idea was good. The police were unlikely to look for terrorists among hairdressers or women in a beauty parlor. Neither were they likely to search parlors for weapons and explosives.

The first robbery was plotted in

late November, with all the military precision learned in North Korea. López, who had worked at the Banco de Comercio in Morelia for a while, suggested the target. He recalled that about three times a month the bank sent a courier by bus to deposit U.S. dollars in a central bank

a pistol and, binding and gagging him, threw him on the floor of the back seat. Shortly before six o'clock, they drove to the bus station, where Bravo and two more members of the squad were waiting.

When the courier stepped from the bus, the six guerrillas saw that



in Mexico City. With the approval of Gómez, the plotters decided to waylay the courier.

Four guerrillas visited Morelia to familiarize themselves with the appearance of the courier, a thin, elderly man. One, "Comrade Hilda," remained in Morelia to watch the terminal of the Three Star Bus Company. The night of December 18, she telephoned Mexico City to report that the courier had departed on a bus due in the capital at 6 a.m.

About 4 a.m. in Mexico City, three guerrillas hailed a taxi. They knocked the driver unconscious with

he was escorted by a young man they believed was a police detective. They quickly wrestled both men to the ground, then grabbed the courier's satchel, ran to the stolen taxi and escaped. Hurriedly, Bravo ripped open the satchel, passed out handfuls of dollars and stuffed some into his own pockets. Abandoning the cab, the guerrillas fled. In the safety of an apartment, Bravo counted out the money he had kept—almost \$30,000. Not until he read the afternoon papers did he learn that the total loot was \$84,000.

With money allocated by Gómez,

EAST GERMANY
WEST GERMANY
FRANCE
RUSSIA
North Korea

Bravo bought a Volkswagen and a Datsun van. Gómez also sent a courier to the Texas border to purchase wigs for disguises and walkie-talkies. The remainder of the \$84,000 was allocated for weapons and operating expenses.

While his men plotted additional robberies and trained more and more recruits, Gómez scheduled the first guerrilla attack for July 1971. He planned to detonate bombs simultaneously at 15 airports, hotels, restaurants and public buildings throughout Mexico.

The explosions would proclaim the existence of the *Movimiento de Acción Revolucionaria* and a siege of the Mexican government. Each subsequent bombing, robbery and assassination would be calculated to achieve maximum shock and publicity at minimum risk. Continuing and intensifying terror, first in one part of the country, then another, would create a growing aura of guerrilla invincibility and government impotence to protect its citizens. Such an aura could be expected to attract to the movement extremist groups and opportunists who thought to secure their future by joining the winning side. Additionally, through atrocities against police and public officials, the guerrillas hoped to provoke the government into retaliatory measures that would alienate many citizens and drive them into MAR ranks.

The movement would also gather strength in the Mexican mountains, in whose virtually uncharted areas

bandits and fugitives had long found refuge. At the outset, only small raiding parties would venture out of the mountains to sabotage railways, bridges, power lines and factories. In time, organized battalions would descend to ambush army units and sack whole towns.

These terrorist tactics would be accompanied by unremitting psychological warfare. All propaganda would sound one underlying theme: the inevitability of guerrilla triumph over the "injustices" of Mexican society and government. Each attempt of the government to defend itself against the guerrillas would be seized upon as proof of its "repressive, totalitarian" character. Selected, sympathetic foreign correspondents would be invited to melodramatic interviews portraying the romance of revolution, the idealism of young men impelled by conscience to take up arms. All the while, the KGB through its worldwide resources would surreptitiously foster the impression that the masses were rising up against another degenerate Latin American oligarchy.

"The Colonel" Asks Some Questions

THEN the unforeseen happened. In February 1971, an elderly constable was walking homeward outside a small mountain village some 30 miles from Jalapa. It was a long walk, and he often stopped to rest at an abandoned shack about halfway to his house. On this afternoon, as he approached, he heard voices from

the shack. Looking inside, he saw four youths, one of whom was drawing a diagram on a blackboard. More out of curiosity than suspicion, the constable said, "Good afternoon, friends. What are you drawing?"

"None of your business, old man," one of the young men answered contemptuously. "Get out of here."

"Just a moment," said the constable. "I am a police officer. I have asked a proper question. . . ."

"Get away or we'll beat hell out of you!" shouted the youth.

As two of the young men advanced on him, the constable drew his revolver. "I warn you, I am a good shot," he said. "Take the blackboard and march."

The constable delivered the four to the police. To them, the diagram was a mystery, and had the youths offered the least explanation, they doubtless would have been released. But their insolent refusal to say anything caused the police to telephone Mexico City.

The next morning, a man who was introduced only as "the colonel" arrived. He saw at once that the blackboard diagram was of electrical transmission towers—towers being marked for destruction. A gifted interrogator, the colonel soon extracted all that the four youths knew—which was not very much. They said that a "Comrade Antonio" had persuaded them to become "guerrilla warriors" so they could "fight for Mexico." He told them that he

would return in a month or so to inform them of plans for their training. Meanwhile, they were to practice shooting and making bombs. One youth did remember that Comrade Antonio had mentioned a "*Movimiento de Acción Revolucionaria*." Another thought they would be trained somewhere in Jalapa. The search for an MAR hideout in Jalapa began.

About a month later, in Mexico City, Gómez ordered Bravo to inspect the clandestine MAR center in Jalapa. Bravo took a bus to Jalapa, and knocked on the door of the guerrilla house at Guadalupe Victoria 121. He did not recognize whoever it was that politely opened the door, but this was not surprising because by now the movement had many new members. As soon as he stepped inside, he heard a shout: "*Manos arriba, traidor! (Hands up, traitor!)*" Looking into the muzzle of a submachine gun and the fierce eyes of the man who held it, Bravo sensed that he stood very near death.

Shortly after midnight, he was ushered into a room at the police station and left alone with "the colonel." For four or five minutes the colonel stared at him silently, responding to nothing he said. Then the colonel methodically began his interrogation, and soon Bravo had told everything. The KGB had never dealt with Bravo, and Gómez had withheld much from him. But as leader of a contingent to Korea and an accomplice in the robbery, he knew a great deal, including

the importance of Gómez and the location of several guerrilla centers.

Four days later, Gómez, having heard nothing from Bravo, traveled to Jalapa himself in search of him. The guerrilla house appeared dark and empty as he unlocked the front door. But suddenly a beam from a flashlight struck his face; then the lights flashed on. "Ah, Señor Gómez," said a man pointing a cocked .38-caliber revolver. "It is you for whom we have waited most."

Led away to jail, Gómez screamed curses and vows to kill all who might have betrayed him. It was useless. Within the week, the Mexican security service devastated the *Movimiento de Acción Revolucionaria*, raiding its clandestine centers, capturing its 19 most important leaders and laying traps that would ensnare many more.

"Mexico Is Grateful"

WHEN the intelligence advisers presented their report the night of

March 12, they were able to accompany it with voluminous and concrete evidence. It was the kind of proof any responsible chief of state covets on the eve of a momentous decision. Photographs showed the American M-1 rifles and .45-caliber pistols, hand grenades, cartridges, shortwave radios, even some of the money remaining from the robbery. Signed confessions and captured diaries recorded the training of the guerrillas and their plans for terror. Dossiers on Kolomiakov, Netchiporenko and Diakonov detailed their involvement and that of the KGB.

It was clear that Mexico had barely escaped grievous damage. The Russians might never have realized their ultimate goal of creating "another Vietnam." But they were only months away from achieving their minimum objective of serious social disruption. Had the guerrillas multiplied and mounted sustained attacks, Mexico would

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have had to waste its resources on new arms and armies. These could have been raised only at the expense of education, industrial development, transportation, rural electrification and social reforms.

"I have some thoughts," said the President. "I wish a few more hours to contemplate them. Let us meet again in the morning." As his intelligence advisers turned to leave, he called to them: "Gentlemen, you have saved your country and our people from terrible tragedy. Mexico is grateful."

On March 15, the government announced the capture of the guerrillas and indicated that arrests were continuing. The announcement shocked Mexico, but doubtless the consternation was greatest in the *Referentura* at the Soviet embassy. The ripening fruits of years of planning, hundreds of clandestine meetings, and painstaking recruitment suddenly were destroyed. And, momentarily, Moscow

would be demanding explanations.

There was, however, one consolation for the KGB in the official announcement. It offered no intimation that the Mexican government had the least suspicion of the true sponsorship of the *Movimiento de Acción Revolucionaria*. Apparently, Gómez had not talked; seemingly, Netchiporenko, Kolomiakov and Diakonov were safe.

Then, on March 17, Mexico ordered its ambassador to leave Moscow quietly. The following morning Diakonov, the Soviet chargé d'affaires, received a curt message: His presence at the foreign ministry was required immediately. Foreign Minister Emilio Rabasa greeted him with none of the customary niceties.

"The continued presence of you, Dimitri A. Diakonov, Boris P. Kolomiakov, Oleg M. Netchiporenko, Boris A. Voskoboinikov and Alexandre P. Bolchakov [the latter a KGB officer involved in recruiting students] is intolerable to my gov-

ernment," the foreign minister announced. "You are hereby ordered to depart the territory of Mexico immediately."

"What is the reason for this?" asked Diakonov.

"Señor Diakonov, you, I and the State Security Committee of the Soviet Union all know the reason why," replied Rabasa. "There will be no further discussion. This interview is at an end."

The expulsion of five diplomats, including the chargé d'affaires, was an extraordinary diplomatic slap in the face for the Soviet Union. Mexico was aware that whenever a nation dares to expel KGB officers, the Soviet Union retaliates with a belligerent denunciation and the arbitrary ouster of an equal number of diplomats from Moscow. However, having recalled its ambassador, Mexico now had only four diplomats left in the Soviet Union. If the Russians retaliated in kind, they would, in effect, sever diplomatic relations. Thereupon the Mexicans could order all Russians out of Mexico and close the great Soviet sanctuary of subversion once and for all. So, the Soviet Union swallowed its humiliation without protest.

Other Latin American nations rallied to the support of Mexico. Colombia and Honduras sent their ambassadors to the foreign ministry to declare their endorsement of the Mexican action. Leading newspapers throughout the hemisphere denounced the Russians and praised

the Mexicans. Costa Rica consulted the Mexican government, then announced suspension of negotiations which had been expected to result momentarily in diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.

On March 21, the expelled Russians waited at the airport for a plane home. Their enforced departure was probably regretted most by Netchiporenko, whose life had been so intimately intertwined with a country he would never be allowed to see again. But he was a good actor to the end, smiling and bantering with reporters. Kolomiakov, the KGB boss who never forgave a mistake, also was in character. Just as their flight was announced, he jumped out of line and took a swing at a photographer. His last blow in Mexico missed.

Epilogue

WHAT happened in Mexico is merely part of a worldwide pattern of KGB subversion. Elsewhere in Latin America, and in Africa and Asia, evidence of KGB efforts to undermine other societies emerges again and again.

- Last July Ecuador expelled three KGB officers after catching them trying to organize nationwide strikes through the Marxist-dominated Ecuadorean Workers Confederation. All three were "diplomats" assigned to the Soviet embassy.

- In 1969, Ethiopia deported three KGB officers and three Czechs who had recruited dozens of Ethiopian students and organized them into

clandestine cells. Handwritten notes and printed propaganda captured from the students showed they were being trained initially to disrupt the universities, ultimately to overthrow the government.

• The Congo threw out the entire Soviet embassy staff of 98 after the KGB openly supported armed rebels against the government in 1963. When relations were restored in 1968, the Soviet Union signed a protocol specifically limiting it to seven diplomats in the Congo. But, by the spring of 1970, the Soviet embassy staff had swelled to 42. Then the Congolese unraveled a KGB network that reached into the universities, the army, the Ministry of Information and the National Documentation Center. Four KGB officers were expelled, and the embassy was again cut down to size.

• In April 1968, Colombian police, alerted by Mexican authorities, searched two couriers at the Bogotá airport and relieved them of \$100,000 which they had received from a KGB officer in Mexico. Eventually, the communist couriers admitted

that the money was destined for the most murderous band of terrorists in Colombia, the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias*.

• Increasing terror in Turkey culminated this year in a series of kidnappings and the murder of the Israeli consul general. Police ascertained that some of the students behind the terrorist acts had undergone clandestine training in neighboring Syria. Further investigation established that the training had been arranged by a Soviet "diplomat" in Damascus, Vladimir Shatrov, and his Russian "chauffeur," Nikolai Chernenkov.

From Ceylon to the Sudan, from Argentina to Yugoslavia, Soviet embassies continue to spawn subversion. All the while, the Soviet Union publicly affects rectitude and professes friendship. The day after Mexico expelled the five KGB officers, the Soviet embassy in Mexico City issued a statement of aggrieved innocence: "We do not understand, we cannot explain the measure taken by the Mexican government."

SYRIA

DIPLOMAT